Dear [local Member of Parliament] (https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP)

I am writing to you as horticulture business in your constituency. We are [Name of business] a [grower/retailer/landscaper/manufacturer] at [address] and employ X people.

I wanted to make you aware of one of the biggest issue facing our industry and businesses such as mine – overseas trade and specifically the border target operating model (BTOM) the Government has initiated.

Over 90% of the UK’s tree and plant growers import plant material (from young plug plants to mature trees) in order to operate. Typically, this is from Europe and in particular the Netherlands. The sector imports over £750m worth of plants per annum, with the UK production sector worth £1.6bn supporting a £28bn overall sector.

**BTOM border changes coming in after the 30th of April 2024**

I implore you to support a review into the ability and readiness of Border Control Points (BCP) to facilitate the trade in plants and plant products (including trees), and believe that more testing and data is needed before we can fully transition from the current model which sees checking by experts at horticulture business sites.

I attach a paper written by the Horticultural Trades Association (who represent my business) setting out the current issues for UK environmental horticulture relating to the BTOM, with a particular focus on the use of Border Control Posts (BCPs) to conduct health checks on plants and trees.

The paper primarily asks for a ‘soft launch’ for BCPs, by way of a temporary easement until the end of January 2025 (or when readiness is achieved) allowing the continued running of Place of Destination (POD) checks for the trade in plants. This would ensure smooth trade, uphold biosecurity and give the time for BTOM. The risks and unknowns around April changes are significant.

Secondly, the paper proposes to use the time until such an easement ends to ensure full BCP readiness for plant health checks, to remove the barriers for businesses to become Control Point designated, to complete the Authorised Operator Status (AOS) model pilot, to have fully tested operations at all BCPs designated to handle plants and that certainty over costs and processes has been achieved.

I would be grateful if you can write to Defra and Cabinet Office Ministers to highlight our concerns.

I would also like to invite you to visit my business so that we can discuss this further and I can show you the impact this will have should the BTOM not be fit for purpose.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,